

APPRENTICE ARTIST

Ages ago, images ago,
I was accustomed to acclaim as a painter
of iris, content with replication:
Brushstroking floral vitals at their peak,
shape and sheen of the premises,
exactitude of shade
and light's promises. The whole canvas
conspiracy of dimension in space.

Comfortable with awards and midlife views,
I'm suddenly disturbed. I see
unguessed galaxies in petals,
in bearded falls, lavender standards,
the exposure of mauve junctures. Nodes
full of knotty runes ripen beyond
the reach of sable hair and palette knife.

Planets and fetal faces
inhabit blue-veined white;
moons, lungs, mountains, bones
blend in plasma of pink, dust of maroon.

The pale scent of yellow
fades from my sleeve. Armies
and godsmiths, prophets
and poets, beauty and sin abide
in furling wetness as tropic pigment
fails. And falls.

But the patient stem,
the stalk of knowing,
twisted now like rusty wire,
supports a forming: Soul and marrow,
bulbous and female,
coveted within sculpted endings.

There is no such thing as still life.
My not yet captured subject seethes
on an inner palimpsest, ruckles and pocks,
before surpassing all invented armature,
clawing its way to the surface
of my clay.

Glenna Holloway